

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



# **SIQUIJOR SEDUCTION ZONE**

*The initial meeting of Agents 32 and 33*

by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) ..... May 2013

Monique (future Agent 32) friend-requested me (future Agent 33) on facebook on May 10, 2010. We know this was the date because Monique still had the friend-request confirmation e-mail, which she stumbled upon while cleaning up her yahoo in-box.

Back at that time, there was no psecret psociety; we were running under the Café 23 flag. I would encourage our nascent cottage coterie by stating things like: Ultimately, there are no non sequiturs - none. It was a lot of punnery, puzzlery, and puffoonery. Some caught the pop fly and had a ball. Others felt wise to do otherwise.

We waded in word play by day; lounged like chaised lizards by night. We even brought Café 23 to real – physical – bars in Metro Charlotte and Greater Los Angeles. Wait, maybe that was the early psecret psociety phase. *Early onset cosmosis.*

Anyway, we decided to drop the Café 23 banner altogether, as there were java joints around the globe using that alphanumeric name. Lawsuits just didn't fit our frame of preference. We certainly didn't want to be pulled into a court room in Rotterdam. Well, actually, if the trip was pre-paid with some free time ... that would be very tempting.

I recall a recon trip to Central Coffee at Louise & Central (in Charlotte). I asked them if I could leave a few short stories on the literature shelf – like this short story, the one you are reading now – and they stoically declined. I remember thinking: *What kind of coffeehouse doesn't allow local publications? A boring one.*

I don't know about you (though, I would bet my imaginary pot farm that you are smarter than me), but local lit is the first thing I alight to when I go into a coffeehouse. *Ah, maybe they're just following the Starbucks model of the sterilized faux coffeehouse experience.*

My thoughts would later be confirmed by an independent older Caucasian lady who noticed our lurid, soccer-length socks and neon shirts, and cheerfully said: "Only happy people wear bright colors."

I replied, telling her that we were indeed happy, but the bright colors were primarily for safety, as we were riding our bikes. She smiled and walked on.

Ah, but let's get back to 2010. Our amorous online correspondence continued through the spring and summer. Chats, messages, e-mails, and all that 'hidden between the lines' stuff.

Then on September 20<sup>th</sup>, I left for Monique's mysterious island of Siquijor. Isla del Fuego, the Spanish called it when they sailed past in 1565. Not because the small island was on fire, but because there were so many fireflies (or lightning bugs as they call them around here). They say that they lit up the Narra trees, and were collectively visible from miles away in the Bohol Sea.

Well, I know that leading off sentences with *well* is not so swell, but after 22 hours of combined flight and airport time, I was in Dumaguete. The coastal city was already bustling in the humid, morning heat.

I then caught the ferry to Siquijor town. The passage was relatively calm, and took about 50 minutes.

Once on Siquijor Island, I took a 38-minute (yes, I timed it; such a temporal nerd) jeepney journey to the town of Lazi on the southeast coast. I finally saw Monique for the first time on Aljas Street at Alvarico Street around noon. She was more charming than expected. What a doll. A pinay princessa with a heart of gold. I spoke first.

“Ah, it’s so great to finally meet you, Monique. You look beautiful.”

“Thank you, Parkaar, [my ailing alias] but those are your words, not mine.”

“My words are true, my dear. I tell no lie, standing, sitting, or lying.” *Or lying?*

“What did you just say?” she asked, sensing a pun run.

“Come closer, and I’ll whisper it in your ear.”

She laughed for a couple of seconds. “Ok, sure.”

Monique walked up to me. I bent my head down and kissed her on the lips. Then I whispered in her right ear: “Mahal kita.” [‘I love you’ in Tagalog, the official dialect of the Filipino language]

“Wow, are you getting ahead of yourself, kano?” [kano is Filipino slang for an American; it goes back to WW2]

I chuckled. "I'd pass my self by to get to your self any day, Monique. You are truly better than imagined or advertised."  
*Advertised? What?!*

"You are making strange statements for your analog audio recorder that you told me about, aren't you, Parkaar?"

"Somehow, I knew that you would say that, Monique. Somehow I just knew."

"I am already onto your little game, dodong." [boy or young man in Cebuano, the primary dialect of the Central Visayas region of the Philippines]

"Holy dodoy, daday! [made-up nonsensical Cebuano-sounding words] Hey, let's go to a beach resort, sexy lady."  
*Yey, he thinks that I'm sexy.*

"How about Salagdoong? It has a great view of Maria Bay. And it has air-con, [air-con is Filipino slang for air conditioning or air conditioner] my loverboy." *Condoms? Check.*

"Sure, let's do it." *Absolutely.*

"But, you first have to meet my parents. They are so eager to meet you."

"Why, most certainly!"

We walked about 100 meters to Monique's parental home. I met her engaging mom and relaxed dad. After a two-hour chat, we bid them adieu and hailed a pedicab (a motorcycle-powered passenger vehicle; a very common mode of transportation in the Philippines).

It was a scenic 15-km ride to the resort that took about 20 minutes on the Circumferential Road. The pedicab then pulled off the asphalt onto some sandy gravel.

“Ah, we’re here.” Monique said.

“Nice place. Good first choice, my gwapa pinay.” [pretty Filipina]

“Salamat, mahal.” [‘Thank you, love’ in Tagalog]

“Walay sapayan, [‘You’re welcome’ in Cebuano] mahal.”

We walked up to the hotel office and got a room on the top (3<sup>rd</sup>) floor. Once inside the room, I walked out on the balcony. The view was travel-show magnificent.

“Wow, you were right, Monique; the view is phenomenal.”

“I know my little island.” *Indeed she does.*

The whole C-shaped shoreline of Maria Bay was visible. The bay’s water was many shades of blue: a splotch of cerulean here, some indigo there, some azure further out to sea. A tropical postcard.

I turned around, and Monique gave me the ‘well, we’re here, and the time is right’ look.

We got busy in paradise. An order of pumperoni pizza. Sausage dog in tunneloni. There were worse places and times on this old orb.

After the initial round of carnal lust, we made our way down to this craggy small conical island that was connected to the

mainland by a gangplank. We climbed up to a rocky precipice, about nine meters (29 and a half feet for my fellow American readers) above the crystal-clear water.

“Want to jump? It looks deep enough, Monique.”

“No, not today,” she said.

“Chicken.”

“Seafood.”

“Shark!” I exclaimed as I saw a six-footer pass by, right where I planned to hit the water. I passed.

It was a night of fun and frolic under a giddy gibbous moon.

Sleep was full of pleasant dreams, one of which, the last one, involved a found message. However, when I awoke the context quickly crumbled.

We checked out after a simple breakfast, and headed to our 2<sup>nd</sup> resort: Princesa Bulakna. It was just 2 km away.

We got a cottage up on the hill. Another magical place. When Monique laid down poolside, I took a photo, which matched the pool’s edge with the bay’s horizon line. One of those ‘the ocean is my pool’ shots.

Later, I hid a short story – like the one you are reading now – somewhere in the rafters. *I wonder if it’s still there.*

I almost fell down placing it. Monique chuckled. It was good times in the equatorial Pacific.

We fell asleep early, worn out by hiking the grounds. There was a strange <bump> in the middle of the night.

“What was that, Parkaar?!” Monique was scared.

“I’ll go outside and check it out.”

“No! Don’t open the door! It’s too risky.”

I sat back on the bed, holding Monique until she fell back asleep on my chest. Nothing happened. The rest of the night was without a bump.

In the morning when I opened the door, I saw a note on one of the stepping stones, which read:

Don’t forget to check the lizard’s tongue.

Monique saw me pick it up. “What is that?”

“Some kind of note.”

“It looks like a fortune-cookie message.”

“Yeah, it does.”

“Do you think someone left it there last night, Parkaar?”

“Maybe so.”

Then we walked down to the office to check out. We saw this blue concrete lizard with a similar note on its forked tongue, which read:

So serene is Serena?



And with those cues, we were off to the Serena Beach Resort in San Juan on the western side of the island. It was owned by a Japanese couple.

Ken showed us to our room. We were one of the few guests there that day. A very quiet place. Well, it was until sunset.

Then all hell broke loose. The older Brit next door, a former judge in the UK, had been drinking all day with his pals. They were blotto-splotto drunk.

Suddenly, one of them started to rev their motorcycle very loudly on the other side of the privacy wall. We had to cover our ears. It was that loud.

Ken saw this and rushed over to confront the Brit. They began to curse and cuss at each other. They even pulled out WW2 epithets. Very ugly. It got very heated. There were threats of bodily harm. We expected gunfire at any moment.

Monique was scared. We moved to a position where we couldn't be struck by a stray bullet. Luckily, no shots were fired. *Whe w! Tragedy narrowly averted.*

The bluster subsided with both saying that they were going to report the other to the barangay captain (neighborhood leader) in the morning.

Ken then came back and apologized for the ruckus. I just told him that these things happen when you combine 12 hours of hot sun with 12 hours of heavy drinking.

We went back to our room and passed out. If I had a dream, it was quickly forgotten ... or shot down.

After a serene breakfast, we checked out. We hailed a jeepney (a Philippines-style bus) and headed down to Coco Grove, only 3 km away.

This seaside resort, probably the most luxurious and expensive one on the island, was popular with international tourists. We heard Swedish, French, Dutch and German in the main café. Some already-loaded Americans kept staring at Monique. *Jeez, I can't get away from annoying kanos, even halfway around the world!*

Monique was not appreciating their stares. "Why do they keep looking at me?"

"Your sublime beauty attracts male eyes."

"It annoys me. Let's go back to our room."

We did. Afternoon delight. The dance of the old wang doodle. Well, you get the scene.

Later, we caught an amazing sunset on the beach. The yellow-orange, ovalized, swollen blob quickly sank below the mountains of Negros Oriental (the province/island to the west).

As dusk filtered in, the west wind picked up. It felt good. Refreshing. Mind invigorating.

The swells were white-capping at the ledge of the coral reef. A floating bottle was being blown in. When it was in only two feet of water, I walked out and grabbed it. There was a note inside. *Wow, a message in a bottle. How kewl is this.*

I removed the cork and shook it. Monique caught the little note as it fell out.

“Is it from Sidonie Fery?” [in the *Bottled* short story]

“Who’s that?” Monique asked with a curious expression on her tan face.

“I’ve no idea. It’s like someone or thing temporarily took over my mouth.”

“Parkaar, you are one silly kano!”

She then proceeded to read the message aloud.

“Pag-ibig at tumawa, [love and laughter in Tagalog] Parkaar,” she announced to me with a sexy smile.

“Is that Tagalog?” I asked.

“Yes, it is.”

“Oh, wow, what does it mean, Monique de Mystique?”  
*Monique de Mystique? Looks like I have a word-art-baller on my hands.*

“It means that we have to go to *Tumawa* to find out.”

“What! Tumawa? Where is that? I didn’t see it on any map.”

“Let’s just keep going the way we’ve been going.”

“Sounds good to me, asawa-to-be.” *Yey, he wants to marry me.*

“Me, too, my bana-in-waiting kano.”

“Tumawa tomorrow!”

“And today. Like yesterday.”